

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

U.S. Secret Service

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**COUNTERFEIT DETECTING CANINES GRADUATE FROM
U.S. SECRET SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAM**

BOGOTA, COLOMBIA – On Wednesday, March 5, 2003, United States Secret Service officials attended a ceremony recognizing the latest additions to the arsenal of tools combating international counterfeiting – counterfeit detection canines.

Under legislation passed in May 2001, the Secret Service received funding to help Colombian authorities establish a counterfeit detection canine program, where teams, comprised of a dog and its handler, undergo a 12-week training program. The first “graduates” of the training program completed their training and are now being used to detect counterfeit currency.

“For nearly eight years, the Secret Service has worked closely with Colombian authorities to fight counterfeiting,” said Secret Service Director Ralph Basham. “Since 1998, the Secret Service and Colombian police have seized more than \$150 million in counterfeit currency and dismantled operations that could have produced billions of dollars in bogus bills. The new counterfeit detecting canines will only help our continued efforts.”

The canine teams will be deployed throughout Colombia, where they will assist authorities in the detection and suppression of counterfeit U.S. currency. In the past, teams provided by the Secret Service have been used to help locate clandestine printing operations throughout Colombia.

“Just as working dogs have been trained to detect a variety of items – explosives, agricultural products, missing people – we have had success in teaching them to detect many of the most commonly produced counterfeit U.S. notes,” said Anthony Chapa, Special Agent in Charge of the Secret Service Counterfeit Division.

In 1997, Secret Service introduced “Mike,” the first canine trained in the detection of counterfeit U.S. currency. “Mike” and his Secret Service handler have had great success in detecting counterfeit bound for distribution in the United States. Since that time the Secret Service has expanded its canine program and used these assets in the United States and other locations throughout the world.

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With the funding provided by Congress in 2001, the Secret Service has worked closely with Colombian authorities to develop, train and equip a select anti-counterfeiting force. This team works in conjunction with the Secret Service in the seizure and suppression of Colombian-manufactured counterfeit U.S. currency.

The Secret Service opened a resident office in Bogota in 1996. As countries throughout South and Central America “dollarize” – adopt U.S. currency as their own national currency – the office expanded its staff and increased its work with Colombian authorities.

The U.S. Secret Service was created in 1865 with the sole purpose of suppressing counterfeit currency. While the agency’s responsibilities have expanded to include presidential protection, its investigative mission still focuses on protecting the infrastructure of the nation’s financial systems.

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Editor’s Note: Questions regarding this release may be directed to the U.S. Secret Service Office of Government and Public Affairs at 202-406-5708.